

your health

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Healthy Weight Loss

With the growing popularity of fad diets and quick weight loss gimmicks, one thing remains clear among most experts: A healthy diet combined with exercise is the key to losing weight and keeping it off.

Healthy Diet. When you're trying to lose weight, it's important to reduce the number of calories in your diet. You can do this by eating less fat and controlling your portion sizes. However, you shouldn't starve yourself or use fad diets. Talk with your doctor to find out how many calories you should be consuming every day. A healthy diet includes:

Low amounts of fat. Some fat in your diet is necessary for energy and vitamin absorption. However, no more than 30 percent of your total daily calories should come from fat. Be

aware of the types of fat you're eating, too. High levels of saturated fat, which mainly is found in animal and dairy sources, can lead to high blood cholesterol levels. This puts you at greater risk for heart disease and other health concerns. A healthier alternative is monounsaturated fat. This type is found in olives, olive oil, cashews and avocados. It actually has been shown to reduce the risk for heart disease.

Plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products. This is where most of your calories should come from. These low-fat foods provide vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates and other substances that are good for your health. Your diet also should be:

- High in fiber
- Low in cholesterol
- Low to moderate in sugars, salt and sodium

Exercise is an important component of any healthy weight loss plan. Try to include some moderate activity most days of the week. Walking, gardening, dancing, jogging and swimming are all great ways to keep moving.

Exercise reduces the risk of obesity, hypertension and heart disease. It also increases longevity, and reduces anxiety, depression and stress. With a regular exercise routine, most people start to see and feel results in about four to six weeks.

Before starting a weight loss routine, talk with your doctor—especially if you are age 40 or older, have a health condition or have been inactive for a while.

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Are You Getting Enough Fiber?

Many health experts advise people of all ages to eat dietary fiber. It may help prevent cancer, diabetes, heart disease, obesity and other health problems. Fiber isn't thought of as an essential nutrient in general. But, it's recommended that adults consume between 25 (women) to 38 (men) grams a day. Sadly, this is almost double what the average person actually eats.

Also, healthy toddlers and children should have only slightly lower amounts than what's suggested for adults each day. Ask your child's doctor about what's best.

What is fiber?

Fiber is a complex carbohydrate that's found in plants. It has no calories because the body can't absorb it. This means low-fat, high-fiber foods are usually low in calories.

Fiber is divided into two categories. Each acts uniquely and gives different health benefits. Soluble fibers help lower cholesterol and regulate blood sugar. Insoluble fibers often are used to treat some bowel disorders. Nearly all foods with fiber have more insoluble than soluble fiber. In most cases, it's best to get fiber through your diet rather than with supplements.

Which foods have insoluble fiber?

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Dried beans
- Wheat bran
- Seeds
- Popcorn
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain foods (breads, cereals, pastas)

Which foods have soluble fiber?

- Fruits (apples, oranges, pears, peaches, grapes)
- Vegetables
- Seeds
- Oat bran
- Dried beans
- Barley
- Rye
- Prunes

Try not to increase your fiber too much over a short period of time. It may cause discomfort. You may experience bloating, cramping, diarrhea or gas. Add fiber gradually over several weeks. Talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian for more information on how to add fiber to your diet.

Cut the Fat

Let's face it. Americans consume too much fat. Trimming the pork from the federal budget is complicated, but cutting fat from our diets isn't. Here are 6 simple steps:

1. **Use measuring spoons.** Don't pour oil straight from the bottle for sautéing or throw butter on mashed potatoes without measuring first. Measuring promotes awareness. You'll find it easier to stay within your daily fat allowance if you do.
2. **Pick fish, lean meat cuts or white meat chicken or turkey.** Trim all the visible fat from meat and skin poultry.
3. **Grill, broil, bake, steam and microwave foods instead of frying them.** It's okay to

sauté, but use minimal amounts of healthy fats like olive or safflower oils.

4. **Choose non-fat dairy products or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese.** You'll save 6 grams of fat by drinking a glass of 1 percent milk instead of whole milk.
5. **Watch for hidden fats in baked goods.** Croissants, muffins, cookies and crackers can be high in fat. Ban trans fats from your diet. Look for trans fats on food labels or partially hydrogenated oil in ingredients list.
6. **Be extra careful when eating out.** Fast food meals and many restaurant meals are laden with hidden fats. Ask the waiter for a low-fat recommendation.

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Belly Fat May Make Migraines More Likely

Being overweight may increase the risk of migraine headaches in young and middle-aged adults, suggests a U.S. study that included 22,211 people.

Age, gender and the way body fat was distributed affected migraine risk. People ages 20 to 55 who had larger waistlines were more likely to have migraines than those with smaller waistlines.

Migraine was reported by 37 percent of women in that age group who had excess abdominal fat, compared with 29 percent of those without abdominal obesity. Among men 20 to 55 years old, 20 percent of those with excess belly fat reported migraine, compared with 16 percent of those without it.

Among those older than 55, total body obesity wasn't associated with migraine in women or men. But the risk of migraine actually decreased among women older than 55 with large waistlines.

The study, which was released Thursday, is scheduled to be presented during the American Academy of Neurology's annual meeting in Seattle, April 25 to May 2.

"These results, while still in the early stages, suggest that losing weight in the stomach area may be beneficial for younger people who experience migraine, and especially so for women," study author Dr. B. Lee Peterlin, of Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, said in an American Academy of Neurology news release.

"Men and women have body tissue distributed in different ways," Peterlin said. "After puberty, women show more fatty tissue deposits in the hip and thigh area, while men predominately have more fatty tissue in the belly region. After menopause, women show more fatty tissue in the belly area as well. For some diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, excess fat around the waistline appears to be a stronger risk factor than total body obesity."

More information

The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more about migraine:

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/migraine/migraine.htm>

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